

Cardinal Rigali Avoids Prison ... For Now!

by A.W. Richard Sipe

On January 21, 2011 the **Philadelphia Grand Jury** under District Attorney **R. Seth Williams** issued a **Report on sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests**.^[1] The entire text (124 pages) is included in the attached PDF which you can download or view [HERE](#). **It is the finest, clearest, and most complete account of the pattern and practice of the Catholic Church in dealing with priests who abuse minors and their victims. If you want to know the real dynamics of the Catholic clerical system read this report.**^[2]

In short: the **Grand Jury** released what has been termed a "sordid" (in content) report on clergy sex abuse. This led to the arrest of a Catholic schoolteacher and three archdiocesan priests on rape, indecent sexual assault and other criminal charges:

- ▶ **Fr. Charles Engelhardt**, 64, an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, is accused of orally sodomizing and molesting a 10-year-old altar boy in 1998 in the sacristy at St. Jerome Parish in Northeast Philadelphia.
- ▶ **Fr. Edward Avery**, 68, an Archdiocesan priest who was defrocked in 2006, is charged with the same offenses against the same boy. And this boy's sixth-grade teacher at St. Jerome School, 48-year-old **Bernard Shero**, is accused of orally and anally sodomizing the then-11-year-old in the back of the teacher's car.
- ▶ **Fr. James Brennan**, 47, an Archdiocesan priest, is accused of forcing his penis into the buttocks of a 14-year-old former parishioner when he was in the priest's bed. At the time, the summer of 1996, **Father Brennan** was on leave from Cardinal O'Hara High School. In 1997, he was returned to active ministry and assigned to St. Jerome Parish.
- ▶ Importantly, **Monsignor William Lynn**, former Vicar for clergy is charged with endangering the welfare of children for allowing the priests work.

in 1996 and 1998. **So much for the church's claim that clergy abuse is in the distant past.**

Cardinal Bevilacqua who was not indicted, but whose hands were obviously dirty according to the **2005 Philadelphia Grand Jury Report** (after 6 appearances), escapes an indictment again because he has "dementia" and cancer.

There have been priests accused and convicted of child rape before, but what is very significant for the entire church in the U.S. is that the supervising priest, **William Lynn**, is indicted for the endangerment of children. (Cf. LA and Mahony). **The noose is getting closer to episcopal necks as investigations get more objective and the pattern of abuse in the system is laid out. Children are endangered precisely because cardinals know exactly what their Vicars do. Vicars do exactly what their boss wants.** (Cardinals do exactly what their boss wants — that is the Pope.) Bishops and cardinals use an elaborate system of denial to cover their tracks. Chancery offices are filled with people who will take the "fall" for their boss. Bishops — especially cardinals — act like **Hogan's Heroes Sergeant Schultz**, they proclaim *"I know nothing"* or *"they did it"*.^[3] Or, as **Governor Frank Keating** portrayed them, as operating like *"cosa nostra"*.

Cardinal Rigali was on the defense immediately once the report became public and he claimed, *"there are no archdiocesan priests in ministry today who have an*

admitted or established allegation of sexual abuse of a minor against them". This, of course, is not what the Report laid out for all to examine. **The Grand Jury could trace 37 credibly accused offenders who are still in ministry.**

Rigali went on YouTube to reassure the *faithful* of his sadness for abuse, but he thumbs his nose at the problem and victims — all of the faithful — as he pulls a legalistic hat-trick when he insists, *"Mistakes are one thing...Intentions are another"*. No evidence of effective reforms or real responsibility are evident in his statements. PR hustle, yes.

Cardinal Law was not pursued for criminal behavior, not because the **Massachusetts Grand Jury Report** lacked evidence, but because state law demanded "criminal intent" to convict.

It remains to be seen if Lynn will be convicted. Will he be a foil for his superiors? Will he tell what he knows in a criminal trial? A common church trick to avoid exposure is to have an indicted priest plead guilty, take his sentence and receive an annuity as reward.

Scrutiny of bishops and cardinals will not be dissuaded by protestations of sadness and sorrow for abuse. The time for apologies is over. Now is the time for responsibility.

This second **Philadelphia Grand Jury** after two years of investigation concluded that:

- ▶ **The archdiocese lacked "urgency in its efforts to eradicate sexual abuse by its priests."**
- ▶ **The church appointed panel looking into the allegations dismissed credible charges against a priest by more than one independent victim.**
- ▶ **The actions of the archdiocese are simply not the actions of an institution that is serious about ending sexual abuse of children.**
- ▶ **The archdiocese remains focused on protecting its assets and reputation above all else.**

These conclusions are strikingly similar to previous Grand Jury Reports. Note the first U.S. investigation to examine and assess the problem of sex abuse in the diocese of Rockville Center, New York — the **Suffolk County Supreme Court Special Grand Jury** published on January 17, 2002:

- ▶ *The history of the diocese [RC] demonstrates that as an institution they are incapable of properly handling issues relating to the abuse of children by priests.*
- ▶ *Officials used the hollow promise of treatment and reassignment for offenders and ... monetary payments to ... guarantee silence.*
- ▶ *The conduct of certain officials would have warranted criminal prosecution but for the fact that existing statutes are inadequate.*

The **Massachusetts Grand Jury** reported on priest sex abuse in the **Archdiocese of Boston** on July 23, 2003. **Its conclusions are so commensurate with the Philadelphia findings that if the locales are redacted the content would be indistinguishable.** For instance from **Boston**:

The widespread abuse of children was due to institutional acceptance of abuse and a massive and pervasive failure of leadership. Officials knew the extent of the problem for many years before it became public. Officials did not inform

authorities of allegations. They withheld information from investigations. They failed to adequately investigate allegations. Officials transferred abusive priests to other parishes or dioceses. They failed to supervise priest abusers. In short they put children at risk for abuse.

Why? To preserve image and save money.

There is no evidence that things have changed in **Philadelphia** since a prior Grand Jury Report was published in 2005. But this current report is more dangerous for the clerical establishment because it comes closer to laying indictable blame for continued clergy violation of minors exactly where it really is — with the boss, the cardinal, or at least at this stage with his vicar.

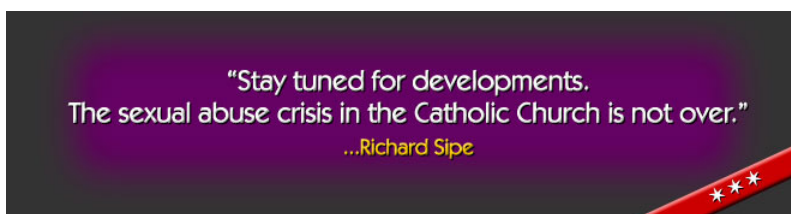
Until this message becomes operative, effective and implemented the **Roman Catholic Church** will continue to select, produce, hide, and defend sexually abusing priests.

A recent press headline may indicate change in the civic pressure on the *modus operendi* of bishops in the United States:

(Reuters) **The Archbishop of Philadelphia and his predecessor were accused on Monday [February 14] in a civil lawsuit of endangering children by concealing the identity and sexual abuse of predatory priests from law enforcement to save the church from a costly scandal.** Among the seven people and three institutions named in the lawsuit filed in Common Pleas Court in Philadelphia were the current Archbishop Cardinal Justin Rigali, his predecessor Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, Monsignor William Lynn, the Rev. Richard Cochrane and Martin Satchell, who has left the priesthood.

The lawsuit accuses the Archdiocese, the sixth largest in the United States with 1.5 million Catholics, of implementing **"programs and procedures that were misrepresented to the public as providing help to victims of childhood sexual abuse by clergy, but were instead maliciously used to develop information to protect the Archdiocese"**.

Stay tuned for developments. The sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church is not over.



Richard Sipe, is the author of eight books on sex and celibacy in the Catholic church, most recently as co-author of ***Sex, Priests and Secret Codes***. He also has been an advocate for hundreds of victims of child sex abuse in the church. After spending 18 years as a Benedictine monk and priest, he was trained as a clinical counselor to deal with the mental health problems of priests. During that training and therapy he conducted a 25-year ethnographic study of the celibate/sexual behavior of the clergy population. His study, published in 1990, is now considered a classic. Internationally known, **Sipe** has participated in 12 documentaries on celibacy and priest sexual abuse aired by *HBO, BBC*, and other networks in the United States, United Kingdom, and France. He has been widely interviewed by media including *CNN, ABC, NBC, CNBC, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, People magazine, Newsweek* and *USA Today*.

Further information can be found on Richard Sipe's website: www.richardsipe.com